

in burned churches and bombed buildings—including efforts such as today's resolution. The only way we can meet our challenges is by meeting them together—as one America—and

giving all of our citizens, whatever their background, an opportunity to achieve their own greatness.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Alexis Herman as Secretary of Labor *April 30, 1997*

I want to thank the Senate for its strong show of support for Alexis Herman. There was never any question that she was highly qualified to be Secretary of Labor. She understands the needs of workers and understands the challenges they face as we approach the 21st century.

This is an important time for the Labor Department. The Department must reform and manage programs that will help prepare America's working men and women for the challenges of our changing economy. Alexis Herman is fully prepared to lead the Department in this effort. She will be an outstanding Secretary of Labor.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Adoption Promotion Legislation *April 30, 1997*

I congratulate the House of Representatives on the passage of H.R. 867, the Adoption Promotion Act of 1997. This bipartisan legislation will further our efforts to give the children waiting in the foster care system what ever child in America deserves—loving parents and a healthy, stable home.

The First Lady and I have had a continuing commitment to uniting these waiting children with families to teach, guide, and care for them. In December, I directed the Department of Health and Human Services to come up with

a strategy to simplify the adoption process and move more children more quickly from foster care into permanent homes. In response to this directive, HHS submitted Adoption 2002, a report which takes its name from one of its central goals—to double by the year 2002 the number of children adopted or permanently placed each year.

The Adoption Promotion Act of 1997 incorporates many of the recommendations made in the administration's report. I urge Congress to keep this important legislation moving forward.

Statement on Signing the Assisted Suicide Funding Restriction Act of 1997 *April 30, 1997*

Today I am signing into law H.R. 1003, the "Assisted Suicide Funding Restriction Act of 1997," which reaffirms current Federal policy banning the use of Federal funds to pay for assisted suicide, euthanasia, or mercy killing.

This is appropriate legislation. Over the years, I have clearly expressed my personal opposition to assisted suicide, and I continue to believe

that assisted suicide is wrong. While I have deep sympathy for those who suffer greatly from incurable illness, I believe that to endorse assisted suicide would set us on a disturbing and perhaps dangerous path. This legislation will ensure that taxpayer dollars will not be used to subsidize or promote assisted suicide. The Act will, among other things, ban the funding of assisted suicide,

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euthanasia, or mercy killing through Medicaid, Medicare, military and Federal employee health plans, the veterans health care system, and other Federally funded programs.

Section 5(a)(3) of the Act also assures that taxpayer funds will not be used to subsidize legal assistance or other forms of advocacy in support of legal protection for assisted suicide, euthanasia, or mercy killing. The restrictions on the use of funds contained in this section, properly construed, will allow the Federal Government to speak with a clear voice in opposing these practices. The Department of Justice has advised, however, that a broad construction of this section would raise serious First Amendment concerns. I am therefore instructing the Federal agencies that they should construe sec-

tion 5(a)(3) only to prohibit Federal funding for activities and services that provide legal assistance for the purpose of advocating a right to assisted suicide, or that have as their purpose the advocacy of assisted suicide, and not to restrict Federal funding for other activities, such as those that provide forums for the free exchange of ideas. In addition, I emphasize that section 5(a)(3) imposes no restriction on the use of nonfederal funds.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
April 30, 1997.

NOTE: H.R. 1003, approved April 30, was assigned Public Law No. 105-12.

Memorandum on Excused Absence for Employees Affected by the Flooding of the Red River and Its Aftermath

April 30, 1997

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Excused Absence for Employees Affected by the Flooding of the Red River and its Aftermath

I am deeply concerned about the devastating losses caused by the flooding of the Red River and the impact on the well-being and livelihood of our fellow Americans who have been affected by this disaster. Elements of the Federal Government have been mobilized to respond to this disaster.

As part of this effort, I request the heads of executive departments and agencies, who

have Federal civilian employees in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota in areas designated as disaster areas because of the flooding of the Red River and its aftermath, to use their discretion to excuse from duty, without charge to leave or loss of pay, any such employee who is faced with a personal emergency because of this flood and who can be spared from his or her usual responsibilities. This policy should also be applied to any employee who is needed for emergency law enforcement, relief, or clean-up efforts authorized by Federal, State, or local officials having jurisdiction.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Remarks Commemorating the Centennial of the Thomas Jefferson Building at the Library of Congress

April 30, 1997

I ask you tonight to listen to these words as if you had never heard them before and try to imagine what it was like when they broke across the landscape of America and the world, arguably the most important words ever written

by an American because out of them all the rest flowed:

“When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them